

### Keyword Searching vs. Topic Searching

What are the differences between keyword searching and topic searching? Below is a breakdown of the differences between the two types of search methods, including advantages and disadvantages:

<b>Keyword</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Search of matching documents that contain one or more words specified by the user.	Search of indexed documents. User selects Topic displayed in A-Z list or Tree hierarchy.
Use of natural language words to describe the subject matter.	Use of pre-defined "controlled vocabulary" words to describe the subject matter.
A more flexible way of searching. Can combine terms in a number of different ways.	A less flexible way of searching. Must use the controlled vocabulary terms.
Often yields too many, too few, or irrelevant results. Keyword searches are more vague and do not take into account the actual meaning of the words. If a term has more than one meaning (such as "arms" — body parts or weapons?), irrelevant documents may be retrieved.	Results are usually relevant, but might not be comprehensive. Topic searches will be very specific, focusing only on indexed material. A disadvantage of topic search is that not all material is indexed, so results might not be comprehensive.